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# *Are you thinking of adoption for your child?*

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## *Who can I talk to?*

You've seen the doctor. The answer is yes. You are pregnant. Who can you turn to? What should you do?

You may be thinking of adoption. Or you might want to keep your baby. Perhaps you can't decide. It may help to talk it over with a social worker. At no cost to you, you can either go to a Children's Aid Society, or to a private social worker who can advise you. This booklet tells you how to go about it.

No matter what you plan to do, your mind will be more at rest if you get help, soon. Read on.

## *What can the Children's Aid Society do?*

Look in your phone book for your local Children's Aid Society. They will have a social worker you can talk to. The decision is still yours, whether you keep your baby or choose adoption. Children's Aid Societies have foster homes, where you may place your baby in care for a short time while you decide. There is a lot to think about, and the social worker can help. Your wishes will be respected. You'll find out what your choices are. Then you can make the best plan for your baby.

## *What about private adoption?*

Adoption in Ontario can also be done by a person or an agency licensed to work in private adoption. **They must have a license from this Ministry to arrange adoptions.** You may want to talk things over with one of these private workers too. If you would like some names of these people or agencies near where you live, contact the Ministry's Private Adoption Clerk at (416) 327-4730. For more details about private adoption, see the section *How does private adoption work?* later in these pages.

## *Can I change my mind after the baby is born?*

Yes, you can, and some people do. *It's your baby.* You may want to change your plans, or get more help. You don't have to make such an important decision in a hurry, or under pressure.

## *How does a child get adopted?*

There are two ways:

### **1) Consent of the parent**

The parent signs consent — that is, permission — to the adoption, any time after a baby is at least seven days old. Whether you have chosen a private or Children's Aid adoption, this consent must be signed in front of a Children's Aid Society person who has the authority to take consents. If the father is living with the mother, or has declared he is the father and helped to support her, he

should sign consent too. You will be given a copy of the consent. After this signing, **the parents have 21 days in which they can change their minds and take back their consent.** This must be given in writing to the Children's Aid or Court that was named in the consent form. The child may or may not be in an adoptive home at this point. It is then the responsibility of the person who placed the child to return the child to the birth parents.

The person arranging the adoption of your child must give you a chance to have your own legal advice and counselling before you sign the consent. If you, a parent, are under 18, the Official Guardian's office must have one of their staff explain your rights to you so you understand what you are signing. The Children's Aid or the private adoption person will make an appointment for you with an Official Guardian staff person in your area.

## 2) Crown wardship

The second way a child is adopted is by first having the child made a **ward of the Crown.** The parents of the child go to court before a family court judge. The judge listens to all the facts, and then decides what is the best plan for the child. He may make the child a ward of the Crown. A **Crown ward** may be adopted. The responsibility for planning for a child who is a **Crown ward** is given to the Children's Aid Society. If the Children's Aid Society is suggesting Crown wardship for your child, the Society's social worker will carefully explain the reasons to you, and the way this is done.

In some cases, the judge may make the child a **Society ward** for a short time so the parents will be able to make a plan for the child. The child is usually in a foster home, and during this time the parents can visit the child. A **Society ward** cannot be adopted, because the parents still keep parental rights.

## *How does private adoption work?*

A private agency or person must be licensed by this Ministry to place any child on adoption. Private adoptions must have the approval of the ministry before a child may be placed for adoption.

A home study must be done on the family who wants to adopt. This is to try and make sure the baby will have a good home and a loving family. The home study is done by a social worker approved by the Ministry. If you are having your baby adopted, you will need to have a 'medical and social history' taken. It is a full report of your state of health, your way of life and your family background. This way, your child will know something about his/her background and the reasons why you planned adoption. Adopted children need to have their questions about their birth answered in an accurate and truthful way as they grow up. This information will help adopting parents to answer these kinds of questions.

Also, the medical history helps the adopting parents to know about possible health problems your baby may have inherited from you. The private agency or person who is arranging the adoption must submit the home study and the health and social history for approval to the Ministry. This person can also arrange for you to meet with a social worker and talk about how you feel, and about the kind of family you would like for your child.

There is no charge to you for arranging a private adoption.

## ***Can I choose the family for my child?***

Yes. Whether you choose to go through the Children's Aid or privately, you do have plenty of say in the choice of a family.

If the child is older, he or she will also be part of this decision.

## ***Will I know anything about the adoptive parents?***

You are entitled to non-identifying information about the adopting family. However, some adoptions nowadays are much more "open" than they used to be. For example, you and the adopting family may agree to send each other letters, cards and pictures over the years. Sometimes the baby's parents meet the adopting parents at the beginning. Some even go on visiting one another later on. It is important to talk about this with your social worker right from the start, if you would like to have as open an arrangement as possible when your child is adopted. No names and addresses will be given to either the adopting family or the birth parents unless everyone wants it this way and says so in writing.

## ***Can I just give my baby to a family I know and like?***

No. It is a criminal offence. Only a Children's Aid Society or a licensed private agency or person can place a child for adoption, unless the child is being placed with his or her grandparents, aunt or uncle, great-aunt or great-uncle, or step-parent. It is also against the law for you to receive any payment or reward for the placement of your child.

## ***Can my baby go directly from the hospital to the adoptive family?***

Yes, if the placement is approved. Adopting parents are told that if the birth parents withdraw their consent within 21 days, the baby must be returned.

## *What happens if I change my mind after the 21 days have passed?*

If the child has been placed for adoption you cannot take back your consent. But if the child has not yet been placed, you can go to family court and explain your reasons for changing your mind. The judge will listen to you, and decide what plan is best for the child.

## *What is the home study about?*

It is a number of interviews between the family who wants to adopt, and a social worker approved by the ministry to do home studies. The worker gets to know the parents, and must be comfortable with their ability to bring up a child in a good and loving home. Parents must be healthy and emotionally stable, and earn enough to support a family, and be able to raise children in a caring way. The home study is a kind of education for parents too. Once they learn as much as they can about adopting, they are asked to look at their own abilities, and decide if they do have the skill for this important job.

## *What if my child has a disability?*

A disability doesn't have to stop a child from being adopted. There are many parents who have adopted children with various disabilities, and have provided them with loving, happy homes.

## *Will I be able to see my baby before the adoption?*

The choice is up to you. Most adoption workers think it is better if you do see your baby. If you don't, you may always wonder what the baby looked like, and whether he or she was healthy.

## *Who registers the baby's birth?*

You do. There are forms for this at the hospital. By law, the parent must register the baby's birth within 30 days. Most give their baby a full name, even if they have adoption in mind.

## *Why do I have to give a medical and social history?*

This important information about you and your family should be on file, along with the reasons you have for planning adoption for your baby. Your own written words and thoughts will mean a lot to your child in later years. It will help explain why he or she did not grow up with you. It will also answer other big questions, such as what looks or talents he or she may have inherited from you. Some pictures on file can also be very important to your child later on.

When your baby is older, he or she will want to know about both parents, and what they meant to each other. It is best to have the baby's father give his own family history for the file. If this is not possible, give your worker as many facts as you know about the birth father and his family, and try to explain why the rest isn't available. All the information you provide will be given to the adopting parents, (without names) to pass on to your child as he or she grows up. A copy of this information will also be kept on file at the Ministry of Community and Social Services, so it will be there for your child later, if needed.

## *Will I know when my baby's adoption is completed?*

Yes, if you ask the Children's Aid Society or private adoption worker, they will let you know.

To avoid delays in a private placement, it is best to act early in your pregnancy, to find out if adoption is what you want for your child. No matter what you plan, getting advice and care early will help both you and your baby.

## *Does adoption mean I'll never see my child again?*

No. In Ontario, at the age of 18 or over, the child can register with the ministry's Adoption Disclosure Register. You can also register after your child is 18. So can the child's birth father. If parent and child are both registered, you will be able to meet one another, after you have had counselling. People who adopt children nowadays are told that their adopted children might look for their birth family when they are old enough. Forms are available from Children's Aid Societies, or directly from the Register by contacting

Ministry of Community and Social Services  
Adoption Unit, Adoptions and Operational Services  
24th floor, 2 Bloor Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1E9  
Telephone (416) 327-4730

To get in touch with your local Children's Aid Society, look in your telephone book or call telephone Information.





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